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1965/02/06

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A NEW APPROACH TO RETALIATION

Problem: Can a policy of retaliation be conceived and executed so as to provide an important boost in the morale of the South Vietnamese, hamper the flow of men and supplies to the VC, and eventually influence Hanoi to cease its support and direction of the insurgency -- always minimizing the risk of uncontrolled escalation?

A Possible Solution: With these objectives the following "rules of engagement" are proposed.

1. We should change our basic philosophy and criteria for reprisal.

In partnership with the Government of Vietnam, we should announce and maintain the option to retaliate against any VC act of violence to persons or property.

2. In practice, we may wish to restrict our reprisals at the outset to those VC acts significant enough, say, to have received the attention of the press. Thus, we might retaliate against the assassination of a province chief, but not necessarily the murder of a hamlet official; we might retaliate against a grenade thrown into a crowded cafe in Saigon, but not necessarily to a shot fired into a small shop in the countryside.

3. Once a program of reprisals is clearly underway, however, it should not be necessary to connect each specific act against North Vietnam to a particular outrage in the South. It should be possible instead to publish

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